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ABSTRACT

Strong faculty relationships can benefit developmental programs by increasing referrals, creating a climate of support for developmental activities, and increasing resources available to programs; therefore, finding, keeping, and using faculty friends represent essential needs for such programs. Faculty friends may be generated in a number of ways ranging from simple provision of information on program activities to extension of offers of services to faculty members. Even a simple "thank you" is an effective way of garnering support. Once faculty support has been obtained, it is important to plan ways of using that support so that it will not fade away. This can be done in a variety of ways, including having faculty members publicize in their classes both general information on the developmental program and on specific activities; participate in programs to aid student academic adjustment; make videotapes for use in developmental work on note taking; tape descriptions of introductory classes for use during advisement and registration; serve on a developmental studies committee; actively search out likely candidates to become tutors in the program; and provide the developmental program with syllabi of their introductory courses. From publicizing the developmental studies program to acquiring student and faculty respect for and participation in program activities, establishing close working relationships with the faculty is essential. (FL)

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Working Together: How to Make, Keep, and Use Faculty Friends

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Working Together: How to Make, Keep, and Use Faculty Friends

Developmental programs are frequently seen as stepchildren on campus. Faculty tend to view such programs as needed devices for retaining students, but bemoan the fact that students served in developmental programs possess mediocre abilities at best and would probably fail if challenged with college-level material. Others who support the concept of developmental education don't understand what developmental programs can and cannot do. Still others are willing to actively help in developmental functions if they are approached in the right way at the proper time.

What is needed by the developmental program are better ways of relating well to the faculty to convert potential program enemies, to inform friends about program capabilities, and to enlist the aid of those who can help the program function more effectively. I would like to suggest a series of activities to accomplish these goals. All have been tried and found effective in achieving and maintaining a high level of faculty support for developmental programs over a long period of time.

Making and maintaining friends

One quick and easy way to keep faculty informed about the developmental program is by a monthly report sent to key faculty and administrative people.

This report should contain data relevant to the number of students needing basic skills help, the number of students served, new programs being started, progress of old programs, staff development activities, offers to perform services(readability surveys, etc.), possibly suggestions for improving teaching effectiveness, and a monthly commendation for a faculty/staff member who has aided the program in some manner. This commendation places the recipient's name before the administration and the department head in a favorable manner. Such unsolicited positive notice can help, albeit in a small way, in preparation of a tenure or promotion case.

Another channel for spreading favorable information is the department meeting. Speaking at a department meeting assures the developmental program wide exposure. The larger the campus, the more certain it is that many faculty will not know the program exists. Appearing at the department meeting not only insures program exposure, provides information on program functions, and helps allay fears and negative feelings, but associates a face with the program—which is a significant force in obtaining faculty referrals.

In making a departmental meeting presentation, brevity is essential because impatience and boredom can blunt people's desire to ask questions or to offer comments. Presentations frequently lead to a greater number of referrals and may lead to more willing and friendly voices when aid is requested at a later time.

Another way to gain support is to offer selected services to the faculty. At the beginning of each semester, a flyer might be distributed containing an offer to give study skills presentations

for students in any content classes, or to provide a readability survey for course textbooks currently in use or being considered for adoption. Though these services do cause a time drain, they benefit students at the same time as the faculty member gains an opportunity to perceive developmental program staff as interested in her/his students. The word passes through the department about these services, and soon more instructors will ask for help. The effort is worth the relationships developed. The number of takers for the proffered services will probably remain small enough to handle, around fifteen requests for a typical fall semester.

Once faculty members know about available services and start sending students for help, the instructors should receive information on which of their students are coming to the developmental program and on the progress being made by these students. Frequently instructors complain that they have sent their students for developmental help, but that these students have not improved in their studies. Many of the recommended students don't come to the developmental program at all, especially if they think that their instructors won't ever find out whether they did. Providing formal feedback via referral slips means the students are aware that their instructors will know if they are coming for aid. Also, because the instructor writes down the areas on which help is needed, guesswork as to what the student needs to work on may be somewhat lessened. Feedback provided to instructors can help them feel that their referrals have not gone unnoticed, that their students have progressed, and that they as instructors have been partners in this progress.

Somewhat related to the problem of referrals is that of staff attitude toward the faculty. Nothing hurts faculty relationships more quickly than reports that the developmental staff has bad-mouthed faculty in front of students. If an English faculty member has redlined a student paper for questionable errors, the staff should focus on other grammar problems, try to explain what they think the instructor meant by the corrections, or tactfully suggest that the student get clarification from the instructor without implying that the instructor is wrong. Derogatory comments leave students discontented, but frustrated because they cannot change an instructor's grading patterns. Further, instructor bad feeling limits referrals, and thus opportunities to help students succeed. One unhappy instructor can create a pool of hostility toward the developmental program both within her/his department and in the faculty lounge.

Conversely, when a student compliments an instructor or when the developmental staff finds out something good about an instructor, this information should be passed on to the instructor at an appropriate time.

Gaining help

Approaching faculty members for help should generally be both positive and low key. Because we know that the developmental program helps students succeed, we should project this image of

success to the faculty. We are important; we do aid students. In approaching faculty members for help, it is important to project the idea that we know that they are concerned with the success of their students and that we value their ideas on providing better student help. When faculty aid is requested, whether for cooperation in taping a lecture to be used in teaching students note-taking techniques, or in developing extensive cooperative efforts for tying their courses into a special study skills course, a small task or a large one, the faculty members' suggestions, whether significant or somewhat off-base, need positive discussion. Change of attitude can generally be best accomplished by taking them at their starting place and slowly trying to move them to a new position. By discounting or ignoring views, we can lose a potential friend and ally. Frequently, compromises result in significant student gain.

When a faculty member indicates interest in aiding students, this interest should never be allowed to wane. In such situations, the director of the developmental program should be prepared with a

suggestion that can be posed for action. Interest should be cultivated by inviting faculty to all program activities and by staying in touch with them. If contacts are not kept up, it may be hard later to convince faculty that we need them for future projects.

At the risk of some repetition, here is a partial list of possibilities for faculty participation in developmental activities:

1. publicizing in classes both general information on the developmental program and on specific developmental activities;
2. participating in programs to aid student academic adjustment (meeting with a returning adult group to discuss their courses;
3. making videotapes(including model notes and tests) for use in developmental work on note-taking;
4. taping descriptions of introductory classes for use during advisement and registration;
5. providing copies of tests for use in teaching test-taking skills in the developmental program;
6. serving on a developmental studies committee;
7. supporting a budget request for developmental or related services;
8. taking time to talk about their courses with students who are interested in enrolling in them;
9. providing the developmental program with syllabi for their introductory courses;
10. actively searching out likely candidates to become tutors;
11. aiding tutors by providing specific information and feedback on student problems;
12. backing within their departments proposals to give academic credit for tutoring;
13. backing within their departments and with appropriate faculty committees the giving of credit for developmental coursework;

14. attending developmental activities(learning center open houses, special interest group meetings) and encouraging others in their department to do so;

15. discussing student need for developmental services with their peers;

16. taking advantage of readability surveys and study skill presentations in their courses;

17. working with developmental staff to set up a referral system suited to their department's needs;

18. planning a working relationship between a study skills course and a section of their introductory course.

Getting one person in a department involved has great potential for a ripple effect. Word filters through other department members or through members of a coffee klatch or between lunch buddies about the helpfulness and concern evident in the developmental program.

If the help of a faculty member who has not directly expressed an interest in the developmental program is needed, a personal appeal, delivered during a slack season(not at the start or at the end of a semester, or during an advising period) is best. The approach should be for a specific need and should be made far enough in advance of the activity for which aid is being sought that there is ample time for the faculty member to prepare for participation.

A final consideration is the "thank you" for services rendered, which should be directed both to the faculty member and to his/her superior. Such gestures make recipients feel appreciated, an uncommon event for many of them, and they can strengthen their willingness to do more things to aid the developmental program. The "thank you" is one of the best of public relations devices.

While no method of obtaining faculty support for a program is universally effective, those cited above have all been proven of value. From publicizing the developmental program to acquiring student and faculty respect for and participation in program activities, establishing close working relationships with the faculty is essential. Persistence is required, and emphasizing the need for aid from key departments will help in plotting the amount of time certain cooperative efforts should receive. Whatever time is spent will have a payoff in improved program effectiveness.